593 maternal uncle's children. Then when the bride joins her husband in his father's house, she will come directly under the supervision of her paternal aunt, a woman whom she has already seen, and who represents an extension of her own family in the strange household. Such an ideal arrangement still makes no provision for a selection of mates on the basis of personality adjustments. It merely makes the change from one household to the other a little easier than if the girl were a total stranger. Very often a girl's fiancé is killed and she has to marry one of his brothers, a cousin, or someone of an entirely different family, and there will be no familiar aunt to smooth things over, but instead a suspicious and exacting mother-in-law, with whom her only ties are through her husband.

583 It is no wonder that brides sometimes run away. If they come home their fathers usually return them. Not infrequently they elope and if they are lucky settle in some city, or distant countryside where the limb of Lek Dukagin's [538] law is not long enough to reach them. Gheg epic poetry, which the traveler hears sung night after night in private houses, hans, and gendarmeries, dwells frequently on the theme of elopement. One hears at length about couple after couple, hopelessly in love, who break all of the rules, run away, and meet a tragic but inexorable fate. In the epics they seldom if ever make good their escape. In real life I believe that they sometimes succeed, and their elopements, successful or otherwise, help reduce the population of the mountains.

589 If a young woman is faced with a marriage which she cannot bring herself to consummate, and if she has enough strength of character to take the following step, she can avoid matrimony by becoming a "sworn virgin" (fig. 10, *d*). She summons a meeting of the 12 elders of her community and in their presence swears perpetual chastity. By this means she not only gets out of her engagement, but also prevents a feud between her father's kin and those of [838] her fiancé. At this point she becomes technically a man. She may or may not don masculine clothing. She will carry a gun, and fight like other men. She will plough and reap, and do all of the tasks of a man. If she breaks her oath, the elders will, in theory, burn

[See Cat. 116, p. 110--Analyst]